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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 7203
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RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 7648
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 5742
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BRASILIA 000159

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DEPARTMENT FOR D, P, T, WHA, AND PM

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: REGIONAL STABILITY, GLOBAL ASPIRATIONS BEHIND NEW
DEFENSE POSTURE

REF: A. BRASILIA 0066

[1](#)B. BRASILIA 0129

[1](#)C. IIR 6 809 0092 08

[1](#)D. IIR 6 809 0097 08

[1](#)E. 2007 BRASILIA 1568

[1](#)F. 2007 BRASILIA 2132

[1](#)G. 2007 BRASILIA 2151

[1](#)H. BRASILIA 0006

[1](#)I. SAO PAULO 0019

[1](#)J. 2007 BRASILIA 1836

[1](#)K. BRASILIA 0093

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD M. SOBEL, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUBJECT: Global Aspirations, Regional Stability, and Brazil's
Defense Posture

[1](#)1. (S) Summary. Discussions between Ambassador Sobel and Defense Minister Nelson Jobim, along with Brazilian defense-related activities with France and Russia and in South America suggest the key elements shaping Brazil's new defense posture. The military's traditional role in maintaining internal stability and its potential roles as domestic crime-fighter and international peacekeeper will be important elements in shaping Brazil's new national defense strategy (septel). However, it is becoming clear that regional stability, particularly with regard to Venezuela, traditional sovereignty and border concerns, and Brazil's "rightful" place on the regional and world stage will remain central, and perhaps overriding motivations for the GOB. As we prepare for Jobim's March visit to Washington, understanding of these basic Brazilian motivations regarding security will be important in defining our approach to this new opportunity for security engagement. End summary.

Jobim's Focus Becoming Clearer

[1](#)2. (S) Over the course of several discussions with the

Ambassador (refs A and B), the most recent on the eve of his departure on January 25 for France and Russia, Jobim revealed in increasing detail his goals for these visits and his activities in the hemisphere. The key elements that emerged are 1) pursuit of a nuclear submarine, using French assistance on propulsion as well as other systems; 2) a general desire to increase Brazil's domestic manufacturing capability for weapons via technology transfer; 3) more specifically, an interest in becoming a service hub in South America for Russian equipment, driven by a desire to have greater leverage over Hugo Chavez's Venezuela; 4) a focus on rebuilding Brazil's military capacity, including fighter aircraft; and 5) a new, more structured organization of South American defense ministers.

What Does It Mean?

13. (S) Jobim's visits to France and Russia (refs C and D) are the GOB's first significant move to actively pursue these priorities with countries that he believes will be willing to provide the necessary technology transfer as well as equipment. Moreover, Jobim was joined, exceptionally, by presidential foreign policy advisor Marco Aurelio Garcia, MRE Secretary General (Vice Minister) Samuel Guimaraes' chief of

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staff Marcos Pinta Gama, and Long Term Planning Minister Roberto Mangabeira Unger. The presence of the first two individuals, in particular, make clear that, for the first time in decades, Brazil is beginning to consider security issues as an important element of foreign policy.

14. (S) Although Jobim himself has not commented extensively

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on the GOB's motivations for focusing on these items, they dovetail with Brazil's traditional focus on regional stability, the new regional threat posed by Venezuela, and the need to defend its national sovereignty and borders. Brazil's military and foreign policy elite make consistently clear that regional stability is their overriding concern within South America. Venezuela has now become the central focus of Brazil's regional stability concerns. Brazilian observers regularly and publicly express general concerns about Chavez's destabilizing influence on Bolivia and Ecuador, as well as his troubled relationship with Colombia, even though Ministry of External Relations (MRE) contacts refuse to admit to us even in private that they are worried about Venezuelan interference in other countries. More importantly, the Ambassador has now been told by three respected members of the foreign policy elite--Senate Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee head Heraclito Fortes (refs E and F), sitting senator and former president Jose Sarney (refs G and H), and Former Finance Minister Antonio Delfim Netto (ref I)--that they believe Venezuela under Chavez could well make a military effort to reclaim the half of Guyana (west of the Essequibo River) that it considers lost territory, principally as a way to deflect public attention from domestic woes.

15. (S) The general policy approach of Lula and his foreign policy team in seeking to maintain stability in the region does not differ enormously from that of his predecessors; historically, Brazilian governments have avoided taking sides in Latin America and followed a policy of trying to maintain good relations with all of their neighbors. Uncertainty about Venezuela has added a new element, however, leading to a more concerted effort to contain Chavez. Brazil is the leading advocate of Venezuelan admission to Mercosul, a move that, if approved by the Brazilian and Paraguayan congresses, will further complicate both the stated economic integration and political objectives of the organization. From Lula's point of view, bringing Chavez into a political organization in which Brazil has strong influence makes sense.

¶6. (S) Similarly, Lula's proposal to create a new organization of South American regional defense ministers, which Jobim is actively pursuing, may achieve little in the way of defense coordination, but would serve a political objective of bringing Venezuela and other regional troublemakers into a common organization that Brazil could use to exercise a measure of control. Finally, while the proposal to serve as a hub for servicing Russian equipment in the region will do little to develop Brazil's defense manufacturing capacity or to serve Brazil's own defense needs, it does make sense if Brazil believes that performing such a function could help control the spread of Russian weapons in the region. This objective might also explain the interest in allowing a Russian military jeep manufacturer to set up shop in Porto Alegre (ref A), a capability Brazil does not need but which might serve to entice Russian interest in allowing Brazil to serve as an equipment hub.

¶7. (S) Border security and sovereignty concerns also continue to be a driving factor for Brazil's desire to re-build its military, develop a domestic manufacturing capacity for military equipment, and beef up its air defenses, in particular. Brazilians continue to perceive their long border with ten neighboring countries as vulnerable, justifying maintenance of a strong defense posture. The most likely scenarios with direct military implications for Brazil involve non-state actors such as the FARC and international criminal organizations operating across borders. Nonetheless, although it seems highly unlikely that the GOB's first reaction would be to send in the troops, Brazilians see a military incursion by Chavez into a neighboring country as

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plausible, in light of Chavez's unpredictability, and see having a strong military as a deterrent. Moreover, they continue to hold suspicions regarding the intentions of the international community--including the United States (ref J)--with regard to the Amazon. Brazil sees a strong military as an important element in backing up these assertions of sovereignty over the Amazon.

¶8. (S) Beyond concerns about Chavez and regional and border security more generally, Jobim's priorities suggest that Brazilian interests are also motivated by Brazil's growing desire to take its "rightful" place among the world's powers and to be seen as a worthy of a permanent UN Security Council seat. It is this objective, which senior GOB policy makers place above all other foreign policy goals, that is driving Brazil's interest in a nuclear submarine (ref K).

What does it mean for us?

¶9. (S) Brazilian leaders believe that now is their time to play a more important global role. This, combined with Brazil's continuing concerns regarding regional stability, the threat posed by Venezuela, and border security, will form the backdrop to the discussions and to Brazilian positions. While we may not agree with Brazilian views of Brazil's security situation, they will nonetheless form a framework within which we must approach our discussions with Minister Jobim and other GOB officials. While we should seek to focus on more realistic areas for bilateral defense cooperation, such as peacekeeping, we cannot afford to dismiss these core Brazilian concerns, which will be important considerations as we seek to exploit the opportunities presented by Jobim's visit to Washington in March and Pol-Mil talks in April.

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